

\*\*\*TRANSCRIPT\*\*\*

**How small shop owners can build their brands on social media with low input and high output**

*Podcast interview with Janelle Kozyra, a member of Kimco Realty's blogging team; and Susan Gunelius, Founder and Editor-in-Chief of WomenOnBusiness.com.*

**Janelle: Greetings, everyone. I am Janelle Kozyra, a member of the Kimco Realty blogging team. Today I have with us Susan Gunelius, who is the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of WomenOnBusiness.com, which is an award-winning blog that covers news and information that women need to be successful in the business world.**

**She is also the President and CEO of Keysplash Creative, a marketing communications company that provides copywriting, business communications services, as well as marketing and brand consulting services. She has spent 20 years in the marketing field, and you might have already also seen her byline on Entrepreneur.com and Forbes, which is where she frequently writes.**

**We wanted to talk to Susan today about a topic that's especially important for retail entrepreneurs and small shop owners. Often times, small shops want to weave themselves tightly into their communities and so the owners become the face of their store and the face of their brand. Their online presence, especially their social media presence, plays a large role in how the small shop owner portrays his or her personal brand to customers.**

**And so, it's important for small shop owners to ensure that their social profiles are optimized to support their brand whether that be personal or business, which is actually our first topic of discussion with Susan. So, Susan, it's great to have you with us today. Thanks for joining us.**

**Susan: Thank you very much for having me, Janelle.**

**Janelle: Susan, then what do you advise when you have a small shop owner and you're working with them to help them begin building their social media presence? Do you advise that they build their social media presence in support of their personal brand or in support of their business brand? Which is a really hot topic. There's a lot of confusion around where's the line between personal and business. So, what's your advice and how do you steer small shop owners?**

**Susan: Sure. This is a pretty big decision that you have to make early on because when you think of a small shop owner, chances are they don't have a huge staff to maintain tons of different social media profiles and pages for an individual brand, for a company brand.**

**So, one of the first things you have to do is, what is actually feasible? What can we actually manage? What do we have the budget for to hire someone to help us with it? What do we need to do internally? And, what's realistic?**

**Once you figure out how much work you can actually take on to maintain your online presence, next you have to figure out what are your business goals. Look one year out, three years out, five years out, 10 years out. How do you want your business to grow? How do you want people to recognize and know what your business is, what your products are, who you are? Five years from now, do you want to have your name, John Smith, be the one that people look for and find online in a Google search or do you**

want it to be your business name, your company brand name?

This is a big decision because all of the work that you put into building your online presence should really focus around whatever that core branded online destination is going to be, usually your business blog, and the brand that you want to build in the years to come.

So, for example, for realtors, I often recommend building your personal brand because you might go and work for another company five years from now. For an entrepreneur business owner, I would say that the decision is a little bit more difficult because you might want to have yourself be the face of the brand, brand champion, and everything would revolve around you as the cornerstone of your brand, of your business brand. So, in that case, building your personal brand absolutely makes sense.

But five years from now, do you want to grow your company? Potentially do you want to sell your company down the line? If all the value of the brand is in you personally, it limits what you can do with your business later on. So, you have to think of what your goals are for your business, what your manpower is, what your budget is and what you can actually realistically do. And, from there, you can decide, which brand am I going to invest time and money into building right now—my personal brand or the company brand?

**Janelle: What social media profiles are we talking about here specifically? Because there's a lot of them out there and it can be overwhelming, especially for owners who are new to social media still and they're not sure where to get started. They can feel like there's so much to get their arms around that they're just hamstrung and they don't even know where to begin. So, what are the most important social media profiles to really get a grasp on and to start to build either your personal brand or your business brand, and is there a difference between the two?**

Susan: Sure. And actually, that is exactly why I wrote a book called "30-Minute Social Media Marketing." It's extremely overwhelming, social media, for small business owners, people who don't have budget to hire teams or agencies to help them with all of this social media space and content.

But you can actually be really effective. It's better to spend one minute on social media a day than none to build your brand and your business because every minute you're not there, I will guarantee you there's another business taking those opportunities away from you. Because today, that's where your customers are. They're online. They're on social media. They're using their smartphones and their mobile devices constantly and that's where they get information. They don't pick up the phone book to look for a company. They go to Google and type in some keywords and your business needs to be reflected.

And, social media creates sort of a domino effect. I always recommend starting with a blog that's attached to your company website, your business website, as your core, branded online destination because they're so search-engine friendly because they're filled with content. They're so sharable.

As people read your content and share it with other people, it builds more traffic for your website organically, but it also builds authority to your site because Google sees all of those incoming links from other people who are sharing your content, who are talking about your content. Google will give your webpages a boost in search rankings because if all these people are linking to your content, it must be good. That's what Google's algorithm thinks.

So, a blog is really the cornerstone. That's where it all starts because it's a space you control. You can massage consumers' perceptions of your brand through your content on your blog and make really, really share-worthy content that will spread across the Internet organically.

But after the blog, you also then need to figure out, well, which social media sites am I going to spend time on? I don't have time to be on Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, all of these sites. I can't make YouTube videos. I can't do all of this stuff. Sure, ideally, you want to surround consumers with your branded content so they can select how they want to interact with your brand. Not everybody likes Twitter. Not everybody likes Facebook. But is that realistic to a small business owner? Of course not.

So, what I usually recommend for small businesses that are just starting out and really have never dabbled in social media, they don't know what they're doing, they're completely intimidated, is to start a profile on a couple of different sites. Start a profile on Twitter, on Facebook, on LinkedIn, and just dabble, get your feet wet. See what you think about it. Because, if you hate the tool, you're not going to use it every day.

So, pick the tool that you're comfortable with, that your audience is actually spending time on. Do your due diligence. Do some searches and make sure that it's a place where your audience spends time. If you have a business-to-business company, certainly being on LinkedIn is a better idea than being on Facebook because while Facebook is the most active and biggest social network, LinkedIn is better for driving results for B2B companies, whereas Facebook is certainly better for B2C. So pick a tool that you're comfortable with and invest your time there.

You can use other tools like HootSuite, and you can create automated tweets from your blog posts that can be shared on your LinkedIn profile, your Facebook profile, and your Twitter profile all at the same time so you can have a presence on these various sites. But realistically, you have to pick the one that you enjoy, or you're never going to use it and invest your time in building relationships in that space.

**Janelle: So let's say I'm a small shop owner and I've decided that I want to build my business brand and let's say I'm a B2C organization and I've chosen Facebook. So, what are some of the big things that I should make sure are in my Facebook profile?**

Susan: I would recommend keeping your Facebook profile just for your own personal things. First of all, Facebook, in terms of services, you're really not supposed to use your Facebook profile for promotional content. So, when it comes to Facebook, you should create a Facebook page for your business and you'll want to make sure that you share your blog posts on that page. You're going to want to make sure that you create interesting, useful content.

Images are great and extremely shareable on Facebook. You're going to want to spend time trying to build relationships with people through that Facebook page by commenting, by publishing interesting content, by liking other people's content, by interacting through the comments in your Facebook page.

You can have contests on Facebook. There are lots of different tools that make it super easy to have a contest where you give something away to create buzz. In fact, I think it was in "30-Minute Social Media Marketing" where I tell a great story of a bakery in Boston. They had no money to do any marketing. They needed to cut their marketing costs. They needed to grow their business at the same time.

So they started a business that's called Cakes for Occasions. They're up in Boston. They started a

Facebook page and they spend 15 minutes in the morning, 15 minutes in the middle of the day, and 15 minutes at the end of the day on Facebook. That's all they do, 45 minutes a day.

They make those really cool cakes that you see on the Food Network, not the Betty Crocker box cakes, the really fancy, cool cakes. So they're publishing pictures of their cakes. They'll have a cake of the week, which would be one customer's cake. It gets a special ribbon on the cake. It gets hyped on the Facebook page. Customers love it. They feel it's so cool that their cake is chosen as the cake of the week.

They have a van that goes around Boston and they'll tweet, hey, the Cakes for Occasions van is on the corner of Main Street and 10<sup>th</sup>. Come and get a free cookie. They'll have little flash promotions, which is the same thing, where they'll say, for the next 30 minutes, come into Cakes for Occasions and get a free whatever, pastry.

So through that effort, they grew their business exponentially within a year and they cut marketing costs by \$10,000. And, it's just one example of how publishing interesting, meaningful content to the audience; acknowledging your audience; making them feel special; and being active can make very, very little time on Facebook drive real results for a business.

**Janelle: Do you remember how many people at the bakery were on Facebook?**

Susan: Just the one. They had their Facebook page and there was, I think, an assistant in the bakery who would go on in the morning, middle of the day, and in the evening just for a few minutes and publish something interesting and respond to other people's comments. If you go to facebook.com, I think it's Cakes for Occasions, is actually the url. I'd have to double check but you can see their page and they've had great success with it.

**Janelle: So it really can be a lightweight process. It doesn't have to be this big behemoth that falls in your lap.**

Susan: It doesn't have to be because, again, every minute that you're on social media can only benefit your business. Sure, you want to spend as much time as you can because, again, every minute helps your business. But for a small business owner, it's just not realistic so you have to pick and choose. You have to test to figure out what works the best and spend time listening to your audience. Where are they spending time? Go to those sites.

Go to those social media sites and join the conversation and then, in time, they'll get to know you. They'll get to trust that you're publishing interesting, useful content, and they'll follow you back to your own company blog where you can deepen the relationship.

But, you have to show that you're a valuable contributor, that you're bringing something to the audience, because at the end of the day, nobody cares about you and your business or your brand. They care about what you, your business, and your brand can do for them. And, the quicker you realize that social media isn't a promotional tool, it's a relationship-building tool that drives indirect marketing results—of course, you can supplement it with short-term tactics to drive short-term sales—but the power of social media comes in the long-term, organic, and sustainable relationship growth and business growth.

**Janelle: So, how does all of this translate into foot traffic? Because we've talked a lot about online**

**presence, building your relationships online. So, for these small shop retailers who really want to make the customers come into their store and make the cash registers ring, how does all this translate and connect?**

Susan: Well, and that's another thing that is so cool about social media because you can really do hyper-local marketing through a number of different social media sites. Certainly on Facebook you can, and LinkedIn and even Twitter, you can search and find and connect with people in your local area. You can publish content, for example, on Twitter with hashtags. You can go to sites like [nearbytweets.com](http://nearbytweets.com), find people in your local area and reach out to them. Start to follow them.

You can build brand ambassadors, brand advocates, who will talk about your brand in your local area by connecting with them, finding them, and connecting with them on social media. There was a time 10 years ago when marketers would have killed to have a way to find people who are interested in the types of products and services that they sell. They spent tons of money on advertising with the hope that the right people will see that content.

Today, you have access to those people at your fingertips every day through social media. You just have to be willing to take the time to go and find them, interact with them, and build relationships with them, because they're not going to come to you. You have to reach out to them first.

And that's where all that trust [comes into play] and finding where is your best audience already hanging out online. How can you find them and interact with them? And on Facebook, for example, you can even do advertising that is targeted to specific locations. You can do so much that's localized with social media. It just takes a little bit of extra effort to find people and approach them.

**Janelle: So, we've gone into a lot of really good tips, a lot of the dos. So let's turn this around and talk about some of the don'ts. So what are some of the biggest mistakes that you have seen small shop owners make on their social media pages that are actually weakening their profiles? They could be weakening their relationships with their customers or maybe just not making any headway at all. So, where are some of the common pitfalls and how can we advise small shop owners to avoid them?**

Susan: Sure. One of the most common pitfalls is creating social media profiles and then disappearing. For social media to actually be useful to your business, you need to be visible. You need to be vocal and you need to be working on building relationships with people because social media isn't a push marketing strategy. You're not pushing messages constantly out to consumers in the hopes of interrupting them and catching their attention with one useful message.

Instead, they're pulling information from you. They want good, relevant content from you, from anyone who's publishing online, and your job is to figure out what type of content they want and to give them more of it. It's that pull marketing that makes social media so cool, because the answers are there. You just have to listen to your audience.

And that's a big problem. A lot of even seasoned marketers will try to just apply traditional marketing techniques in social media, and it doesn't work. You have to think more like a publisher and less like a marketer, and that's a challenge because you don't want to interrupt people. You want to enhance their online experience so that they want to spend more time interacting with you.

I think one of the biggest problems that ends up happening is that small business owners spend the

majority of their time self-promoting, and social media is not a tool for self-promotion. You can't only talk about yourself or it will sound like a constant sales pitch and absolutely no one will want to interact with you, follow you, share your content.

I usually suggest use the 80/20 rule where 80 percent of your content is useful, interesting, meaningful to your target audience, and 20 percent or less is self-promotional. And that's usually a pretty safe balance where people won't feel like you're constantly trying to sell to them, and they're willing to accept the occasional promotional tweet, especially if it's useful to them.

If you're publishing a message that you have a discount going on, that you have a special event coming up in your location, and you can use more than just your social media profiles to promote those kinds of events. Those are huge for local marketing for businesses that are trying to get foot traffic.

You can have Twitter meet-ups at your location if you want, where people who are interested in the type of products that you sell will meet up. You can use a site like [tweetup.com](http://tweetup.com) to schedule these kinds of events where you can just get groups of customers, like-minded customers, in your area together and have them come in. Serve some kind of a punch and snacks. Those kinds of things are really popular, and the tools of social media enable you to create them, promote them, talk about them before and after the event, giving you all of these different ways to keep a conversation going with your customers without continually self-promoting.

**Janelle: Great. Thank you, Susan. This was a very interesting conversation here. In light of everything that we've talked about, and there are a lot of tips here, a lot of directions that we can send small shop owners off into after they finish listening to this podcast. What is sort of your last bit of parting advice to help a small shop owner get started today on implementing some of these tips that we talked about and start to really build their social media presence in a way that helps build their brand personally and professionally?**

Susan: Go out and start a blog that's attached to your company website right now and start publishing useful, interesting content. Go out and find your target audience. Who is your target audience? Find out where they're already spending time online.

Are there LinkedIn groups where your customers are already spending time? Are there online forums? Are there websites or other blogs where your target customers are already hanging out? Go there and join the conversation and start to demonstrate the type of content and conversations that they can expect from you, which then reflects back on your brand and eventually you can bring them back to your company blog.

At least create your profile and even if you're not ready to start publishing content on various social media profiles immediately, you want to make sure that you get your profile and protect the name that you want. So get your Twitter profile, your Facebook profile, a Facebook page, your LinkedIn profile, and company page.

Google Plus. Don't underestimate Google Plus because, whether Google says so or not, the vast majority of search engine optimization experts do believe that Google Plus content is used not just in Google social search results, but in Google's general algorithm as well. Get on Google Plus. Get your Google Plus company page and just start publishing content. In time, you'll start to see and start reaching out and connecting with other people, and in time, you'll start to see which site you're having the most

attraction with, which site is driving more traffic back to your own website.

Set up your Google Analytics account. All of these tools are free. And pay attention to what sites are referring traffic to your blog and your website and just don't give up. Persistence is key. The three steps of brand building are consistency, persistence, and restraint, and that persistence is absolutely critical when it comes to social media marketing.

**Janelle: Great. Thank you so much, Susan. This was really informative and we appreciate you taking some time out with us and sharing your insights.**

Susan: You're welcome. Thanks for having me.

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